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PORTRAIT OF BRASS CROSBY, LORD MAYOR OF LONDON,
BY COPLEY

LAST spring the Art Institute acquired an important canvas by John Singleton Copley, a portrait of Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor of London. Since its purchase the picture has been hanging in the Michelangelo gallery at the head of the grand stairway, but it will eventually be placed with the paintings of the early American school in the Byron L. Smith Room. This picture which came from the Archibald Ramsden collection has not been discovered by any of the writers who have made an exhaustive study of Copley and his works. Its acquisition by the Art Institute therefore brings into prominence an almost unknown canvas and one which adds to our knowledge of Copley's English period.

Realizing the disastrous effect of war on art, Copley left his native land as soon as he saw the threatening clouds of "civil war" as he termed the War of Independence. From 1774 to 1776 he traveled in Europe and then returned to London to join his wife and family who had taken hurried passage on the last British boat to leave America. He made London his home for the rest of his life; his London period therefore dates from 1776 to 1815, the time of his death.

From its general style it may be inferred that the portrait of Brass Crosby was painted in the early and most brilliant part of his London period. The exact date of the painting is not known. Brass Crosby was Lord Mayor of London in 1770, but this cannot be assumed to be the date of the portrait, since Copley had not left America at that time. The Lord Mayor in his official robes, the fur-trimmed scarlet cloak, and with all the insignia of office, the collar and seal, sword, and mace on the foot-stool suggest that this was an official portrait. The size of the canvas (90 by 55½ inches) perhaps indicates that it was painted for some public building. Further research may reveal whether Crosby himself or some official body commissioned Copley to

paint the portrait. From 1770 to 1785 Crosby was a conspicuous figure in English politics. During his mayoralty he was shut up in the Tower for championing the rights of the press to publish the debates of parliament, for which act he was looked upon as somewhat of a hero and at the conclusion of his term of office he was given a vote of thanks by the common council and presented with a silver cup. The statue of a draped figure with scales in the background of the portrait is perhaps intended by the painter as a gentle suggestion of Lord Mayor Crosby's fight for justice.

In 1774 and 1784 Crosby again came into prominence in the elections, but both times he was defeated. In 1785 he was elected Governor of the Irish Society. Crosby's most conspicuous service to his countrymen seems to have been connected with his duties as mayor. Hence it is quite natural that he should have been painted in the rôle of Lord Mayor, even though the portrait was made a number of years after he actually held office.

Copley became famous in London without the least difficulty. He was already known before he resided there through his portraits which appeared in the exhibitions of the London Society of Artists. On his arrival in London his friendship with his countryman Benjamin West gave him immediate entree into artistic circles and the best society, and soon he found himself as busy painting lords and ladies as he had been in portraying governors, generals, and their wives in Boston. His work was shown each year in the exhibitions of the Royal Academy and his painting, "The death of Lord Chatham," done in 1780, which was engraved by Bartolozzi and scattered broadcast, added to his popularity. The fact that he had to compete with such established portraitists as Reynolds and Gainsborough seems not to have detracted from his success in the early part of his London period.

The portrait of Brass Crosby—its generous dimensions, warm colors, touch

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of classic sculpture, and general conception in "the grand style," demonstrates forcefully what Copley's visits to the picture galleries of Italy and his association with British painters had done for him. This full-length portrait, and the family groups and historical pictures, which he was also making at this time, represent a broader outlook on life and a more cosmopolitan viewpoint than the "half" and "three-quarter lengths" which predominate in his Boston portraits; while his more extensive use of warm color in this portrait contrasts with the colder color schemes of his American portraits. Copley's letters to his half-brother, Henry Pelham, also an artist, show that he, like Reynolds, was searching for the magic medium used by Titian. The letters written during his European tour are full of recipes for glazes which he expected to try out.

In spite of all his theories on "Tiziano's Colouring" this painting offers no evidence that he discovered the great Venetian's secret, but it does show a more clever and knowing feeling for color than his American portraits. In his American period Copley was a "limner"; in his English period, a colorist.

The Museum is fortunate in being able to add such a distinguished Copley to its group of early American paintings. When contrasted with the "Thomas William Vawdrey" in the Friends of American Art Collection the difference between the two periods is clearly shown. M. B. W.

TWO EXHIBITIONS OF MODERN ART

ON September 19 there were opened in the east wing two exhibitions of modern art of somewhat allied interest, a display of Austrian expressionist art from the Wiener Werkstaette of America, and a group of the post-impressionist paintings from the collection of the late Arthur J. Eddy. These two exhibitions, which will remain on view until October 22, present an opportunity of studying significant influences in contemporary art, in both the fine and applied



THE DANCER — PAINTING BY GUSTAV KLIMT IN EXHIBITION OF AUSTRIAN ART

arts, now coming to have the advantage of more perspective.

The Viennese "Secession" in painting was a revolt against the iron-bound officialism which attempted to keep out foreign art; it was precipitated by the display of the works of the Glasgow school of open-air painting and of the Munich secessionists in Vienna in 1894. In the decorative arts a similar rebellion against the commonplace imitation of the worn-out Biedermaier period gained impetus in 1897 through an exhibition of English furniture made by Chippendale, Sheraton, and Heppelwhite at the Austrian Museum. The arts and crafts movement of England originated by